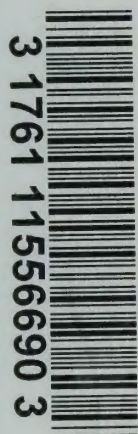




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Family Group Decision Making: Communities Stopping Family Violence

Questions and Answers



Our mission is to help the people of Canada
maintain and improve their health.

Health Canada

Également en français sous le titre : *Mettre un terme à la violence familiale dans les collectivités : L'implication des membres de la famille dans l'élaboration de solutions*

All quotations in this brochure are from the implementation study (Pennell & Burford, 1995) and outcome study (Burford & Pennell, 1997) of the Family Group Decision Making Project that was carried out in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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**Family Group
Decision Making:
Communities Stopping
Family Violence**

Questions and Answers



Family Group Decision Making: Communities Stopping Family Violence has been prepared by Joan Pennell and Gale Burford for the Family Violence Prevention Unit, Health Canada.

Accompanying this brochure is a video, *Widening the Circle*, that provides a dramatization of Family Group Decision Making.

Additional copies of this brochure and details on how to obtain the companion video are available from:

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

Family Violence Prevention Unit

Health Issues Division

Health Promotion and Programs Branch

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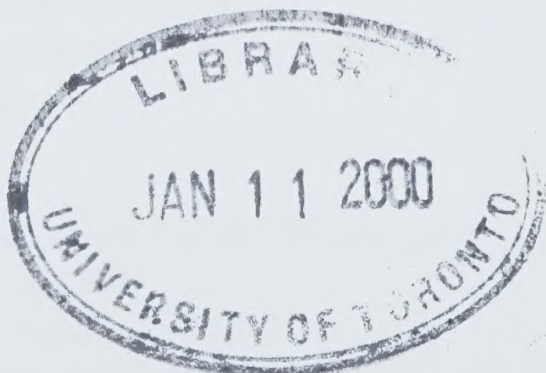


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What Is Family Group Decision Making?

When there is abuse or neglect in families, one means by which family members can decide what to do is known as “Family Group Decision Making.” This approach allows plans to be made by the family, together with their relatives, friends and other close supports. Together, these planners make up the “family group.” Their plans deal with the maltreatment of any family member, whether a child, young person or adult.

- Planning is done at a family group conference.
- Mandated authorities (such as child welfare, police, parole, or probation) refer the family to a coordinator.
- The coordinator works with the family group to organize the conference so that everyone can take part safely and effectively.
- The mandated authorities approve the plan and the resources to carry it out.

"The family is better off because of the conference. In getting everything worked out, getting facts and not gossip. It was really good for my daughter [mother of abused young person], as it took a lot of pressure off of her. My granddaughter [abused young person] also received a lot of support, as she needed this."

– Grandmother, 2 1/2 years after the conference

"My husband's after smartening up... He's calmer. We get along better...for now. Everything came out in the conference so everyone knew what was going on."

– Abused wife, 1 1/2 years after the conference

For what other issues can Family Group Decision Making be used?

In addition to addressing problems of abuse and neglect in the family, Family Group Decision Making has been used in Canada and other countries to respond to:

- youth crime,
- adult offending,
- school suspensions,
- neighbourhood conflicts, and
- reintegrating offenders into their communities.

For examples of such programs, see the list of Canadian contacts at the end of this brochure. Depending on its purpose, the group may include important members of networks such as family and friends and representatives of schools, churches, employers, businesses and services.

The name for this approach varies in different parts of the world, as does its main focus. For instance, in New Zealand, where the approach originated, the term “family group conference” is used in the context of child welfare and youth justice work (Hudson, Maxwell, Morris, & Galaway, 1996). In Australia, the term “community conference” is used with adult offenders to

emphasize the involvement of non-relatives such as neighbours and co-workers (Braithwaite & Mugford, 1994).

“More beneficial than any work that I can do. No way that I can monitor a family one-tenth the way that a family can... can’t live next door to the family....The conference creates a stronger family....The worker alone could not create such a cohesion among a whole extended family.

– Child Welfare Worker, 1 year after the conference

Why Use Family Group Decision Making?

Family Group Decision Making builds partnerships in and around the family by:

- keeping family members safe,
- holding accountable those who committed the violence,
- promoting the well-being of all family members, and
- respecting the culture of the family and its community.

The approach is based on the belief that most families, no matter how difficult their histories and circumstances, can make sound decisions to stop abuse and neglect.

Extended family and other close supports usually have extensive knowledge of the family members, an appreciation of their cultural values, and a long-term commitment to them.

Family Group Decision Making moves us away from a system of criminal justice in which the legal authorities are solely responsible. It moves us toward a system of social justice in which family, community and government can work as partners. When this happens, we move away from a narrow focus on punishing offenders and move toward making sure that we all act responsibly.

“It’s true empowerment. The parole officer didn’t have to leave the room and send upstairs for instructions. Decision making in the right place — at the family level — not up the bureaucracy.”

— Senior Parole Administrator

What does it add to other approaches?

Family Group Decision Making widens the circle of decision makers and, as a result:

- balances power among family, community and government;
- creates what the Australian criminologist John Braithwaite refers to as “communities of concern”; and
- can thereby add to or enhance other approaches.

Courts: When sentencing, judges can use the family group plan to help keep victims safe.

Mediation: The family group goes beyond just reconciling two parties (see Galaway & Hudson, 1997), to reaching a group decision.

Case Conference: The family group does not just include the family but places it at the centre of decision making.

Can the family group really contribute to ending the violence?

Yes, it can, even if family members have multiple problems. To act as competent partners, however, family members need to:

- feel safe and supported so they can express their views at the conference,
- see themselves as having sufficient involvement in decisions that affect them individually or their family as a whole, and
- have access to the resources and protection needed to carry out their decisions.

When involved in this way, family members feel that they are respected and that they have a greater investment in the decisions that affect them. Making this happen is the responsibility of the mandated authorities, community organizations and family group, all working together.

The family group may make mistakes, just as the professionals may have done before them. Now, however, there is involvement by a wider circle of people who know the relevant issues. Family members can know that agencies and authorities support their plans. Professionals can know that more family members are aware of the safety concerns and can help to provide protection.



Once this wider circle is formed:

- family members who have been abused can no longer be silenced,
- family members who have been abusing can no longer play individuals off against each other, and
- help can be offered in a unified and effective manner.

Who makes the referrals?

Almost always, legislation and government policy ensure that referrals to the Family Group Decision Making process come from the mandated authorities (Hudson et al., 1996). Those authorities (such as child welfare and parole) have the power and authorization to consult with the family group when children or others are at risk.

It is widely thought, however, that consideration should be given to (a) having First Nations or other cultural groups take greater charge of protective services for their communities, and (b) having families and organizations make referrals through the mandated authorities.

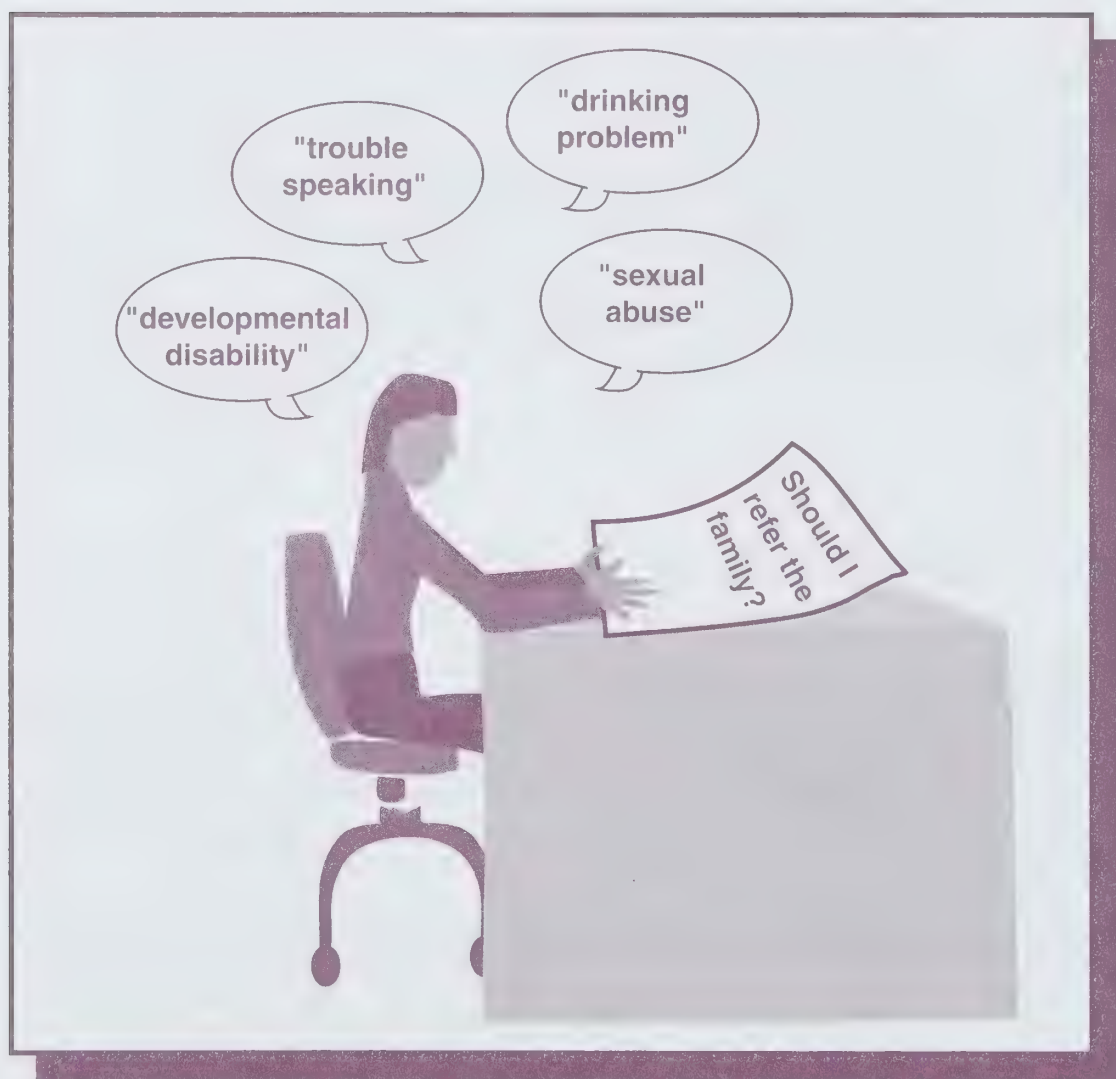
The conference coordinators may or may not be employees of the mandated authority. Wherever they are located, their primary role should be as conference organizers and conveners. The coordinator should not also be responsible for assessing or investigating the cases, making referrals, protecting family members, or carrying out conference plans.

In cases in which family members are abusing other family members, referrals should come directly from the mandated authorities, such as child welfare, youth corrections, police or parole (Pennell & Burford, 1995). Their involvement helps to ensure the safety of survivors because:

- the agency remains responsible for providing protection and resources;

- a controlling family member, such as an abusing parent or partner, cannot withhold consent for the conference even when other family members want the conference to take place; and
- a vulnerable family member, such as an abused wife or mother, cannot be blamed by other family members for requesting the conference if the authority takes the initiative.

After the referral has been made, the coordinator should consult with family members, especially abuse survivors, and then make a final decision on whether to hold the conference.



What types of families should be referred?

Family Group Decision Making has worked well with many types of families, from diverse cultures and with difficult histories. In considering whether to make a referral, the worker should not focus on individual qualities of family members but, instead, should ask the following questions:

- Has the investigation and/or assessment been completed?

(The conference should not become a means for the authorities to carry out an investigation.)

- Are there clear and urgent issues to be resolved?

(If the issues are “fuzzy” and lack urgency, the family group will not be adequately motivated or mobilized to problem solve.)



How is the conference organized?

Organizing the conference takes careful preparation so that the right people attend the conference and do so safely and constructively. After receiving the referral, the coordinator contacts the family to:

- explain the purpose and process,
- consult with them about who should be invited to take part,
- decide on where and when to hold the conference,

- determine how participants can be helped to feel safe and be able to present their views, and
- make travel and other arrangements.

Experience shows that the large majority of invited people agree to take part (Paterson & Harvey, 1991) and, if they cannot attend, send a message expressing their caring and their views (Pennell & Burford, 1995).

Who should be invited?

Questions often arise about who to invite and who not to invite. Usually it is best to err on the side of inviting rather than excluding, in order to:

- gain as wide a perspective as possible on the family's situation, and
- spread as wide a net as possible to find people who can assist in carrying out the plan that will be agreed to at the conference.

The focus should be on finding ways for people to contribute to the conference, rather than on leaving them out.

“Family” should be defined broadly to include relatives, friends, neighbours, religious leaders and other community members who have a long-term involvement in the family or strong commitment to the family members.

Who should not be invited?

Some exclusions may be necessary but should be made only after much thought and discussion. Exclusions would be justified when the individual's presence would:

- pose a significant threat to others, or
- cause a major strain on the abused person/s, or
- when, because of a serious mental disturbance, that person would be unable to function at the conference or would be simply too stressed by it.

“The family decides that the father should have a say, even though letters by him were read to the family. A decision is made that the next meeting [will] take place with the father present.”

- Coordinator describing a conference in which an abusive ex-husband was originally excluded

Should children be invited?

Some programs include younger children at the conferences. Others do not because of concerns about the child's level of maturity and the possible impact of the conference on them (Marsh & Crow, 1997; Merkel-Holguin et al., 1997; Paterson & Harvey, 1991). If the child is not present, the family group can nevertheless be reminded that the conference is being held for the child's benefit by:

- reading a child's message to the conference group, or
- placing a photo of the child in the centre of the circle.

"The oldest of these five children is eight years old and family members from both sides agreed that they would be much too young to have any involvement in the conference."

— Coordinator

What about including young people?

Ordinarily, older children and adolescents should be invited so they can:

- have a say in their own affairs,
- inform others about the impact maltreatment has had on them,
- learn about the impact their behaviours have had on others,
- gain a sense that their family cares about them,
- learn how to take part responsibly in decision making,
- become invested in the conference plan, and
- begin the process of healing.



What if family members are worried about taking part in the conference?

The coordinator needs to discuss with them their worries and find strategies that will help them feel safe and able to express their views at the conference. Some strategies that work well are:

- insisting that abused young people select an adult to stay by them and support them in the conference,
- encouraging others who feel at risk (such as abused adults and abusing family members) to choose a support person to be with them, and
- helping participants write down in advance what they want to say at the conference.

In light of different cultural norms regarding young people speaking before their elders, various strategies may need to be used to ensure that their voices will be included. Some possibilities are:

- bringing a peer with them so that they will feel more comfortable,
- having a senior member of the family speak on their behalf, or
- arranging a pre-conference meeting to hear from the young people.

“From speaking with the children, I became concerned that there would only be a couple of them who would say anything during the conference. It was decided...[to] hold a pre-conference meeting with just the children...to give them a chance to express their concerns...and to show them that many of [their] concerns...they had in common.”

— Coordinator in Inuit Community

What can be done so that the conference belongs to the family group?

So that the family group can feel that this is their conference and not that of the professionals, the coordinator needs to make sure that:

- the culture of the family is respected,
- family group members dominate in numbers, and
- the professionals are prepared to take part in a respectful way.

Culture: Respecting the family’s culture may mean inviting a religious leader or elder to say an opening prayer, arranging interpretation, or selecting familiar foods for the lunch and rest breaks during the conference.

“We had hired an interpreter whom the family had all approved of.”

– Coordinator

Numbers of Participants: To enhance the sense that this is the family group’s meeting, family members should outnumber the professionals. Although the number of family group participants can range widely, the average runs from 6-11 individuals (Marsh & Crow, 1997; Paterson & Harvey, 1991; Pennell & Burford, 1995). The number of professionals attending conferences is usually less, at around two in the United Kingdom (Marsh & Crowe, 1997) and Canada (Pennell & Burford, 1995) or three to four in New Zealand (Paterson & Harvey, 1991).

Preparing the Professionals: The involved professionals need to be coached on how to express themselves at the conference in a way that is both clear and respectful. They need to be ready to:

- state directly their concerns about safety and any “bottom lines” to which the plans must adhere, without telling the family what to put in the plan;
- give enough information so that the family group understands the situation, while not revealing unnecessary details or legally confidential reports; and

- express themselves in words that the family can understand and not feel intimidated by.



"I would say to dress casual, to not come with big files in their hands, to speak to people and not at them, to be clear and factual and brief...to leave judgments out of it."

– Coordinator

"And also to not really concentrate on their faults, but find some strengths in the family."

– Another Coordinator



What else needs to be arranged?

The coordinator may be:

- booking transportation for relatives,
- organizing care for young children,
- reserving space at an accessible community centre, or
- arranging a prisoner's escort.

During this time, the family group members are also working hard to organize their conference by:

- encouraging other members to attend,
- offering a ride to the conference,
- selecting food for the conference,
- agreeing to serve as a support person for another participant,
- considering what should be in the plan.



How long does it take to organize a conference?

With referrals for child abuse and neglect or for adult abuse, the time required for preparations varies from 10 to 40 hours, but usually there is need for work over a two to four-week period (Marsh & Crow, 1997; Patterson & Harvey, 1991; Pennell & Burford, 1995).

The time required will depend on the degree of difficulty in contacting family group members, explaining the process to them, arranging their travel plans, and putting safety measures in place.

Focussing on all the violence in the family could be expected to take longer than focussing only on child abuse.

The coordinator's objective should be to prepare people adequately without unduly delaying the conference.

"Mostly everyone who arrived had a look of fear mixed with anticipation....Once everyone was inside they appeared calm and relaxed, casual conversation occurred and they had coffee and cookies. The circle started to form without any direction from the coordinator. All three families [maternal, paternal, and step families] sat next to their own family members."

– Researcher Observing Conference

What happens at a conference?

Each conference has its unique character because of the individual nature of the family group and the particular concerns being addressed. For child welfare and domestic violence referrals, the conferences typically have the following stages:

- opening
- information giving
- private family time
- finalizing the plan.

“The coordinator set the tone of the conference by clearly stating in a gentle way the problem and gave some information that helped the group on reflective listening skills. She handled the interruptions very well because she asked each member to respect each other by not speaking until that person is finished.”

– Family Member After the Conference

Opening

Starting “in the culture of the family” is crucial if they are to “own” the conference. This may mean having a senior family member greet each person arriving, having an opening prayer, or just having people seat themselves in a way that feels right to them.

The coordinator makes sure that everyone knows:

- each other’s name and their relationship to the abused persons,
- the purpose of the conference (e.g., “We are here to see if there is a way that Sally can live safely with her family.”), and
- the conference process and ground rules (e.g., confidentiality, no violence or interrupting).

“The child protection worker was very open and positive when explaining the story of the family. She brought out very important and positive points on each member of the family. She identified the areas [e.g., abuse, school problems] that needed to be addressed.”

– Researcher Observing Conference

“The shelter worker gave a fabulous presentation on the effects of violence and addictions on women and children in a way that was simple, clear, and respectful. This both gave a great deal of information and helped set the focus for the family (especially the sisters of the offender who had up to now been pressuring the Mom to take him back).”

– Coordinator

Information Giving

Next, the coordinator moves the group into the information-giving stage in which:

- the referring worker sets forth the issues of concern to be addressed;
- other invited professionals give information on a specific topic (e.g., alcoholism, abuse, traditional practices); and
- statements from some family group members, who are either attending or absent, are read out.



Private Family Time

Once the family group has listened to the information and has had the opportunity to ask questions, they are ready to move into their private deliberations.

At this time all of the professionals, including the coordinator, leave the room so that the family group can confer together.

As a safeguard, however, the designated support persons stay in the room. The coordinator and preferably the child protection worker and any other involved authorities (e.g., parole officer) remain nearby in the building to provide information and support as required.

The aim of this stage is to provide the family group with the privacy to develop a plan of their own to address the concerns laid out during the information stage.

“Sometimes the family would start their family deliberations time before the coordinator and information givers were out of the room. The coordinator would then have to say to them, ‘You have to save this until after we leave’.”

– Researcher Observing Conferences

“Some families were really eager to dive in and start.”

– Another Researcher

Frequently, professionals ask if it is wise to leave the family group to meet alone. At times family group members may wonder if they have the knowledge to create a plan on their own.

As a result, some child welfare programs have decided to keep the coordinator in the room, but the majority of programs using Family Group Decision Making have opted for the private family time (Marsh & Crow, 1997; Merkel-Holguin, Winterfeld, Harper, Coburn, & Fluke, 1997; Pennell & Burford, 1995).

The great majority of families find it easier or as easy to talk while the professionals are out of the room (Marsh & Crow, 1997). In New Zealand, legislation stipulates that professionals and those who are not members of the family do not take part in the family's private deliberations.

Often people wonder if violence will break out at the conference. Some research has found that this does not happen (Marsh & Crow, 1997; Pennell & Burford, 1995), and other research has found that it rarely happens (Paterson & Harvey, 1991).

Another worry is that the abusers will manipulate or dominate the planning. Different family groups make decisions in various ways, with different family group members taking the lead. However, family groups commonly use consensus and follow a trusted leader (Pennell & Burford, 1995). The family group arrives at a plan that it thinks it is good enough to go with.”

Family group and professional participants’ evaluations of conferences show that they are generally satisfied with how the conferences are run and how the decisions are reached (Hudson et al., 1997; Marsh & Crow, 1997; Paterson & Harvey, 1991; Pennell & Burford, 1995).

Finalizing the Plan

Once the family group has developed the plan, they ask the coordinator and, if still available, the worker/s (e.g., child welfare, youth corrections, parole, probation, police) to return to the meeting room.

The coordinator reviews the plan with the family group to ensure that it:

- covers all areas of concern,
- is clear about what needs to be done and who is to do it,
- provides for monitors to check that the plan is being carried out and to contact family members and professionals if it is not,

- establishes the means for evaluating the impact of the plan, and
- outlines contingency (or concurrent) plans so that people know what to do when steps are not carried out or when the family members' lives change.

Often it is wise to include in the plan a date at which the coordinator is to reconvene the family group conference or at which the protective service worker is to call a family meeting.

A reconvened conference provides an opportunity to make major changes to the plans or to address new issues.

A family meeting is a time to assess whether the plan is being carried out and to review and make revisions to the original plan.

Except where safety measures must be quickly instituted, the agreed-upon plan is a contract. The plan should not be changed without negotiation between the involved agencies and the family group.

The written plan is then reviewed by the referring authorities and approved if it meets the following criteria:

- it protects the person/s for whom the conference was held, and
- it meets their budgetary guidelines.

In order to expedite timely approvals and to maintain the cooperative spirit of the conference, the protective service worker should be present at the final planning phase of the conference and have the authority to approve the plans on the spot.

Some exceptions to this preferred procedure would occur when there is need for consultation about safety measures, when resources requested exceed specified limits, or when the plan is to be provided to a judge at the time of sentencing.

Even if the plan is to be given to a judge at the time of sentencing, the authorities should be present at this stage of the conference to determine whether they are in agreement.

Almost all families succeed in creating a plan, and most plans gain the approval of the referring authority (Hudson et al, 1996; Marsh & Crow, 1997; Pennell & Burford, 1995).

To help everyone carry out the plan, all family group members and the referring agency should receive a written copy of it.

Usually plans include the very items that professionals would have wished for the family, together with alternatives that only the family group could have thought of. Common items are therapy and counselling, financial assistance or material goods, and educational or recreational programs.

Besides assistance from agencies, the plans usually identify supports (e.g., babysitting, transportation, visits) to be provided by family group members.



When it comes to deciding where children and young people should live, the preferences of the family groups are typically in this order:

- with parents,
- then with relatives (e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles), and

- in non-relative care to which the family will have ready access

(Hudson et al., 1996; Marsh & Crow, 1997; Pennell & Burford, 1995).

Although the family group members want to keep their young relatives within their cultural group, they usually set safety as the higher priority (Pennell & Burford, 1995).

What are the results of Family Group Decision Making?

Plans are often not carried out or completed in their entirety, but nonetheless participants are usually positive about the results (Burford & Pennell, 1997; Marsh & Crow, 1997).

Four main outcomes tend to happen:

- partnerships within and around the family group are strengthened,
- the cultural appropriateness of services is enhanced,
- the safety and well-being of family members are heightened, and
- the placement of children and young people is stabilized.

Partnerships

After the conference, the family group can work together better because its members:

- heard clear information about what actually happened,
- openly discussed painful issues, and
- planned ways to solve problems together and with the professionals.

“Mom and I are closer. When we first had the family group conference, Mom and I weren’t even talking. [My child] is closer to her aunts and uncles.”

– Young Mother, one year after the conference

The professionals can work together better because they all have an agreed-upon plan to follow and can work in unison with the family.

Culturally Appropriate Services

The model works well in different countries and in urban, rural, Aboriginal and other non-mainstream cultures because

- the conference is organized around the family, and

- the plans draw upon the strengths of the families.

“What makes up a community in [a rural area] is mostly families, they are connected, intermarried, related... Typically,...when an offender returns to a community, after having sexually abused someone in that community, ...the community rallies around the offender as opposed to the victim...Once you educate them [at the conference] about the offender...and the impact of sexual abuse,...then the way that they react to or treat that survivor really changes .”

– Coordinator in a Rural Area

Increasing Safety

The Newfoundland and Labrador study (Burford & Pennell, 1997) indicates that reports of child and adult abuse and child neglect decrease in the year after the conference. These findings come from reports of child welfare, police and family group members. A British study (Marsh & Crow, 1997) documents that the social workers thought that the conference plans protected children better or left them as well protected. The national risk register supported the social workers' assessments.

“They [the father and step-mother] know if any time [my son] is neglected...he [the father] will no longer have custody. Also the step-mom knows not to hit him... Reports from the school are good. [My son] also told me that [his] father and step-mom are treating him good.”

– Mother, six months after the conference

Increasing Well-Being

The Newfoundland and Labrador findings (Burford & Pennell, 1997) suggest that in the one-to-two-year period after the conference:

- children and teens advance in some key developmental areas, including their sense of identity, family and social relationships, and emotional and behavioural development; and
- adults and teens acquire better social supports.

“Everybody got closer to one another than before. The family are helping the [mother] with food, clothes, and baby-sitting for her, plus she helps when they need her.”

– Sister of abused mother,
two years after the conference

Stabilizing Placements

The British study (Marsh & Crow, 1997) reports that in a six-month or one-year period after the conference, placements of children were generally stable. Workers thought that in many instances the conferences contributed to the stability of the placements because of the decisions reached and the enhanced family involvement and support.

“The Mom can now do more with the kids [on home visits] because of the extra money [from the conference plan]. Now the kids look forward to visit her and she looks forward to having them.”

– Foster mother, 17 months after the conference

How expensive are the plans?

In general, families are careful in making their requests. In the Newfoundland and Labrador project (Pennell & Burford, 1995), the referring authorities stated that the plans were carried out without any new or additional budgetary allocations being required on their part.

The British study (Marsh & Crowe, 1997) indicates that the process is cost-neutral or may slightly reduce costs. Costs were lower in some cases because the children’s placements were more stable and less time was needed for court and case conferencing.



How do you start it and keep it community based?

To foster partnerships from the outset, planning for Family Group Decision Making needs to include a wide-range of groups that will later be involved in the conferences (Burford, Pennell, & MacLeod, 1995). Representation should come from social services, health, justice, and educational institutions as well as community organizations.

To fit the model to their legal and cultural context, the planning group needs to work out together the guiding principles, policies and procedures.

Once conferencing has started, the program should continue to receive advice from these diverse bodies.

To involve the community, the program planners are advised to provide:

- public education,
- training for staff and other involved programs and organizations, and
- accessible information packages for families (e.g., video, translation).

Hiring criteria for staff should include their:

- sensitivity to the complexities and nuances of family violence,
- awareness of the community's diverse cultures, and
- demonstration of respect for family members.

In organizing the conferences, the coordinator benefits from consulting with a panel of experts on the family's culture and relationships and on possible resources for resolving the concerns.

Who can you contact in Canada for more information?

Calgary Family Service Bureau, Family Group Conferencing Program, Bill Cunes, Coordinator, 200-707 10th Ave. S.W., Calgary, AB T2R 0B3, Tel: (403) 233-2370, FAX: (403) 205-5294.

Offering FGC services to families referred by Alberta Family and Social Services, Child Protection, Calgary Region, with the intent of empowering families to assume a responsible role in developing a plan for care to ensure that children are safe and protected.

Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto, Etobicoke Branch, 70 Chartwell Rd., Etobicoke, Ontario, M8Z 4G6, Tel: (416) 924-4646; FAX: (416) 324-2556; e-mail: jthompson@casmt.on.ca

Developing, in conjunction with George Hull Centre and Catholic Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto, a pilot study of family group conferencing for child protection.

Community Alternative Program for Suspended Learners in Etobicoke (Capsle), Counselling & Attendance Services, Etobicoke Board of Education, Civic Centre Court, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9C 2B3; Tel: (416) 394-4953, FAX: (416) 394-4965, e-mail: zammit.l@admin.ebe.on.ca, contact: Lynn Zammit

Using community conferencing to resolve violence within the school, particularly with reference to returning suspended students to their school with the skills necessary for success.

Community Justice Program, Fort St. John Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 10648 100th St., Fort St. John, British Columbia, V1J 3Z6, Tel: (250) 787-8100, FAX: (250) 787-8133, e-mail: kmarshal@mail.ocol.com, contact: Karen Marshall

Using community justice forums to address the harm done by young and adult offenders, by bringing together victims, offenders and their respective support groups to learn about the effects of the crime and decide how to repair the harm.

Family Group Decision Making Project, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's College, St. John's, Newfoundland, A1C 5S7, Tel: (709)737-8165; FAX: (709) 737-2408, e-mail: gburford@morgan.ucs.mun.ca ; contacts Gale Burford, Joan Pennell, & Susan MacLeod

Tested family group decision making to resolve child and adult abuse within the family in Inuit, rural and urban areas.

Family Group Decision Making Projects,
Department of Child Welfare and Family
Support, Province of Manitoba, Suite 216,
114 Garry St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 4V4,
Tel: (204) 945-6904, FAX: (204) 945-6717,
contact Phil Goodman.

Assessing in four distinctive test sites the capacity
of family group conferencing to assist with heal-
ing and, where appropriate, reuniting families in
situations of child protection particularly, but
exclusively with reference to Aboriginal families.

Regina Alternate Measures Program (RAMP),
Regina Aboriginal Human Services Co-operative,
#2 2815 Dewdney Ave., Regina, Saskatchewan,
S4T 0X8, Tel: (306) 352-5415, FAX: (306)
565-2445, contact Pauline Bucsh.

Using family group conferencing to restore
harmony between victims and offenders and
to have victim input into dispositions for
the offenders; includes Aboriginal and non-
Aboriginal people in a status-blind approach.

Sparwood Youth Assistance Program and
Sparwood Adult Offenders Program,
c/o Majic, Purdy, P.O. Box 1618, Sparwood,
British Columbia, V0B 2G0, Tel: (250) 425-7216,
FAX: (250) 425-0400, e-mail: gpurdy@
mail.rmin.net, contact Glen Purdy

Utilizing community accountability conferences
as an alternative approach to offending youth
and adult behaviour, outside the court system.

Waseskun House, 3601, rue St. Jacques ouest,
Suite 340, Montreal, Québec, H4C 3N4,
Tel: (514) 932-1424, FAX: (514) 932-8454,
e-mail: <http://www.waseskun.net>

Using family group conferencing as a tool for
restoring balance in Aboriginal communities,
in respect to returning offenders.

What are some useful references?

Braithwaite, J., & Mugford, S. (1994). Conditions of successful reintegration ceremonies. *British Journal of Criminology*, 34(2), 139-171.

In order to move away from a criminal justice system that stigmatizes rather than reintegrates offenders, the authors advocate the use of community conferencing. The conferences should include participants from whom the offenders feel caring but who also convey to them a sense of shame for their offenses.

Burford, G., & Pennell, J. (1998). *Family group decision making: After the conference — progress in resolving violence and promoting well-being: Outcome report* (Vol. 1-2). St. John's, Newfoundland: Family Group Decision Making Project, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Volume 1 details the outcome findings from 37 family group conferences held in urban, rural and Inuit settings to address child and adult abuse as well as child neglect. The effects of conferencing are evaluated in regard to family

progress, maltreatment, child development and social support as well as their impact on service systems. Volume 2 compiles the research and consent forms. In addition, a summary report and a fact sheet are available in English and Labrador Inuktitut.

Burford, G., Pennell, J., & MacLeod, S. (1995, August). *Manual for coordinators and communities: The organization and practice of family group decision making* (revised). St. John's, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, School of Social Work.

Available in English, French and Labrador Inuktitut, this manual details the steps in establishing a community-based Family Group Decision Making program and in coordinating family group conferences.

Galaway, B., & Hudson, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Restorative justice: International perspectives*. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

This edited volume addresses the philosophy and practice of restorative justice and reviews the research in the area. Examples are provided from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, Japan and Germany.

Hudson, J., Maxwell, G., Morris, A, & Galaway, B. (Eds.). (1996). *Family group conferences: Perspectives on policy and practice*. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

An edited volume reviews the history, principles and practice of family group conferencing in the areas of child welfare and youth justice. Evaluations are provided from New Zealand, Australia, England and Wales, Canada and the United States.

Hudson, J., Unrah, Y., Seipert, J., & Cunes, W. (1997). *Family group conferencing: Interim report*. Calgary, Alberta: Calgary Family Service Bureau.

The interim report overviews the development of the family group conferencing project in Alberta, Canada and summarizes key findings from its implementation with 18 child welfare families. A final report is available.

Marsh, P., & Crow, G. (1998). *Family group conferences in child welfare*. Blackwells.

Set within the United Kingdom context, an evaluation is provided of the process, outcomes and costs of 80 family group conferences, and findings are compared with those from other approaches to child welfare.

McCold, P. (1997). *Restorative justice: An annotated bibliography*. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

An annotated bibliography extensively covers sources on the theory and practice of restorative justice.

Merkel-Holguin, L., Winterfeld, A. P., Harper, C., Coburn, N. A., & Fluke, J. D. (1997). *Innovations for children's services for the 21st century: Family group decision making and patch*. Englewood, Colorado: American Humane Association.

In order to highlight community-based and strengths-oriented approaches to child welfare, this monograph describes family group conferencing, a similar but more facilitated model called Family Unity Meetings, and a neighbourhood-based approach called Patch.

Paterson, K., & Harvey, M. (1991). *An evaluation of the organisation and operation of care and protection family group conferences*. Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Social Welfare.

This evaluation overviews the early New Zealand experience with the implementation of family group conferencing in child welfare. It provides a national statistical profile of conferences and describes the organization, operation, and resourcing of conferences as well as the resulting plans.

Pennell, J., & Burford, G. (1995). *Family group decision making: New roles for 'old' partners in resolving family violence: Implementation Report* (Vol. I-2). St. John's, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, School of Social Work

Volume 1 details the findings from developing Family Group Decision Making in urban, rural and Inuit settings and implementing 37 conferences to stop child and adult abuse and child neglect. Volume 2 compiles the research and consent forms. In addition, a summary report is available in English, French and Labrador Inuktitut.

Glossary

Coordinator

the organizer and convener of the family group conference

Family Group

the immediate family, extended family and other close supports who are invited to take part in the conference

Family Group Plan

the agreement reached among family group members and approved by the referring authority on how to address the concerns about which the conference was held

Family Meeting

a meeting called by the mandated authority's workers to review and, as necessary, revise the plan with the family group members

Family Time

the conference period when the professionals, including the coordinator, leave and the family group develops a plan on its own

Reconvened

a subsequent conference

Conference

organized by the coordinator to address new issues or to make major changes to the original plan

Support Person

an adult selected by a participant (usually one at risk) to stand by them during the conference and provide emotional support. This person may be a relative, friend, or community member, but is not the conference coordinator or the case worker.

Newfoundland & Labrador Family Group Decision Making Project

For the implementation study, the major federal government funders were Health Canada (Family Violence Prevention Division), Justice Canada (Discretionary Funds Section), and Solicitor General Canada (Police Policy and Research) and, for the outcome study, Human Resources Development Canada (Employability and Social Partnerships). In Nain, the project was co-sponsored by the Labrador Inuit Health Commission.

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Authors

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